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TAGS: PGOV HA

SUBJECT: PREVAL AND THE GOH WRESTLE WITH HOW TO DEAL WITH
CITE SOLEIL, PROPOSES "GLOBAL PLAN" IN COORDINATION WITH
DONORS AND MINUSTAH

Classified By: Ambassador Janet A. Sanderson, reason 1.5(b)

¶1. (C) Summary. President Preval told the core Ambassadors, SRSG Mulet and UN aid officials that persuading the gangs of Cite Soleil to lay down their guns would work only if coupled with a more vigorous effort to improve the slum's conditions. He called for better coordination of assistance programs in Cite Soleil, ensuring that they support and enhance GOH disarmament efforts. He stated that small projects did not have sufficient impact at this time, given the immediate needs of the slum. He asked for the establishment of a joint GOH/donor/MINUSTAH task force to ensure that disarmament and assistance issues are worked in parallel. Donor reaction to the proposal was mixed. Although we are pleased to see that GOH is beginning to tackle the issue of Cite Soleil, Preval's proposal, unless managed carefully, runs the risk of making the international community responsible - at least at the outset - for the success or failure of the GOH's Cite Soleil policy. End Summary.

¶2. (C) President Preval convoked Core Ambassadors, SRSG Mulet and UN aid officials to a two hour meeting at the Presidency on July 28 to discuss Cite Soleil. In a meandering presentation, Preval said that persuading the gangs to lay down their guns would work only if coupled with a more vigorous effort to improve the slum's conditions. He argued that current assistance programs in Cite Soleil and other "hot zones" suffered from a lack of donor coordination, project overlap, and limited vision. What was needed, the president stated, is "a coordinated, targeted and coherent global plan" where disarmament and assistance are complementary and reinforce each other. Preval called for a task force, comprised of GOH, MINUSTAH and donor participants, to develop policy options for Cite Soleil and asked MINUSTAH to organize the group under the leadership of the Prime Minister.

¶3. (C) Preval was clearly uninterested in discussing any programs in Cite Soleil (including those of the USG) currently underway, contending that they were too small in scope to address the slum's pressing needs. He was dismissive of "basketball courts and playground" projects, saying the residents want now something which more immediately will improve their lives. With regard to my presentation of OTI activities in Cite Soleil, Preval suggested that we had spent

more than dols 1 million with little visible impact to date and he requested a detailed read out of our current activities. The international community needed to do better by Cite Soleil, he said. When I suggested that the security situation has hampered our and other donors' ability to work in the slums, Preval got testy.

¶ 14. (C) Preval stressed that his decision to develop a globl plan in no way constitutes "negotiation" with the gangs. Rather, he said, it indicates the "seriousness" of the government's intent. Assistance projects will not be a "reward" to gangs, but rather a means to wean the slum populations from the grip of the criminals. The President also noted that while the government wants to "cut the head" of the gangs, it must find ways to integrate other members back into society. Preval stated that most do want to lay down their weapons, "they know they cannot continue like this." Thus, he said, a carrot and stick policy is in order.

¶ 15. (C) The President's presentation caught most donors, as well as the SRSG (who Preval unexpectedly asked to chair the session), by surprise. Indeed, Prime Minister Alexis had told me the previous day that Preval would likely tell us that he had decided to appoint a joint GOH/MINUSTAH committee to deal with the gangs. Donor reaction was decidedly mixed. SRSG Mulet welcomed Preval's approach, saying the lack of a coordination mechanism had indeed hampered implementation of activities in Cite Soleil. The Canadian Ambassador cited the lack of an overall GOH plan for the area as a major impediment in dealing with the slum's many problems and urged the President to engage the private sector. Our French colleague noted that he was responsible to his Parliament for the use of his aid funds and could make no blanket commitments. SRSG and UNDP rep promised to follow up with

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¶ 16. (C) Comment. Preval confidant Bob Manuel later explained to me that Preval called the meeting to find out what tools he would have at his disposal when the government and MINUSTAH moves on disarmament. (Manuel added that Preval did not not intend to diss our OTI projects.) Stressing that this is a particularly sensitive time in the evolution of GOH government policy on the gangs, he said that the President did not want to show his hand at this stage with specifics about what he intends to do with the gangs. He acknowledged that perhaps the President should have floated this trial balloon of a task force a little earlier. Be that as it may, Preval's idea of a donor/GOH/MINUSTAH task force runs the risk of putting the international community out front on Cite Soleil policy if not carefully managed. Preval knows he has to act, but the ever cautious president clearly is trying to surround himself with as many buffers (and carrots) as possible.

SANDERSON